## DECORATIVE IMITATIONS.—"THE GRAINER'S GUIDE."

TO THE EDITOR.

SIR,—Having seen frequent and honourable mention made of the imitative works of Mr. Charles Moxon, of Marylebone, in the journals of the day, amongst which such authorities as Loudon's well-known work on "Cottage and Villa Architecture," and the "Gardener's and Mechanic's Magazines," I may quote as prominent, wherein also particular reference is made to a large and finely-illustrated volume published by him, bearing the above title, I have been at some pains to obtain the means of judging personally of the merits of his productions, both as an artist and as an author. The first step I attained was an opportunity to inspect the public apartments of Mr. Eastlake, the academician's residence, in Fitzroy-square, where I found imitations of woods, marbles, &c., and was struck with the general *harmony* that manifested itself, both in the leading constituents and minor accessaries of the decorations employed, shewing at once unquestionable taste on the part of the eminent proprietor, and high ability and experience in the artist. These works were executed under the direction of Professor Donaldson. I then learnt that an important and recent instance of Mr. Moxon's imitations was at the house of Mr. Tomline, member of parliament, Carlton-terrace (formerly the Marquis of Abercorn's), to which I was fortunate enough likewise to obtain admission, and was even more highly pleased with the work there executed. I had previously seen the princely mansion of his Grace of Sutherland, Mrs. Rothschild's, at Gunnersbury-park, Gloucester-house, and other residences, where the refined tastes of some of the most distinguished men of our profession had had that broad scope which only such abodes of wealth can afford, and was well familiarized to the profuse blandishments of scagliola in all its species of natural and unnatural marbles and granites, as well as sensible of the crude and opaque characteristics of that composition; and I was the more agreeably surprised to see, in the vestibules and staircases above mentioned, the work of the brush brought, though by some peculiar process, to a degree of perfection which, but for my previous information, I could not possibly have believed otherwise than the produce of the quarry; and that, too, as I learnt, at a fourth the cost of scagliola, a consideration which alone is of sufficient weight.

To give these *deceptions* their full effect, I find that the painter avoids, where possible, committing them to wood, that substance not approaching a stone-like coldness sufficiently to bear them out; and whether in walls, columns, or slabs, plaster, stone, and slate are best suited to his purpose. I remarked also that the *building* of his walls was in large, massive-looking blocks, giving an enhancing and Roman grandeur to them, which would hardly have appeared had they been of narrower-minded dimensions. But a most important feature is the entire absence of the brush-streaks, the cold surface having the polish of a mirror, and giving full beauty to the deep transparency and shadowy-half-tints that are so captivating in these imitations, and which seem totally unattainable in the scagliola.

In the wood imitations, I find he does not revel in knots, or indeed indulge in any knarly, cross-grained *stuff* which the architect would avoid in the real material: also that there is, in his doors and wainscotting, a fine feeling for that harmony which should appear in the stiles, rails, and panelling. Generally, I can only describe them as being of surpassing truth and beauty; they, with the marbles, I understand, have received the encomiums of several leading architects, as well as some of the most discerning of the nobility, who were admitted to view them, and which were indeed well earned. Two of the oldest families, I was glad to learn, have lately taken him by the hand.

Respecting his published work, it would, after the notices which have appeared, be supererogatory in me to occupy space here with my remarks, especially as I wish to glean some of his, where, I think, they may be equally a *guide* to the architect as to the *grainer*. These selections are appended to this letter, the practical matter altogether omitted, being too copious to enter into.

I remain, Sir, very obediently yours,
PEREGRINE, B.A.A.D.

P.S. In reference to the letter of your correspondent, "John Barr," in page 325, who has promised to explain his method of flocking walls and ceilings, I may observe that *I have* seen the Pompeian hangings put up, and have had no reason to alter my opinion respecting them.

If I had thought that in *expressing approbation* of these papers, I should be giving offence to any gentleman in the flock line, or any other, I would, perhaps, have refrained from taking up the subject at all, and especially if I could anticipate the offended party's thinking himself called upon, in supporting his own branch, to depreciate or *run down* the other.

For John Barr's information, the Pompeian patterns *may* be both diminished and enlarged, by curtailment or elongation. When, however, the size of the apartment is such as that *too much* of one of those means would have to be had recourse to, with respect to good proportions, then another pattern should be chosen whose scale is more suitable, and which would be attended with no difficulty where I was favoured with an inspection.

It would be almost imprudent in me to visit the works of the gentlemen your correspondent names, since I might not have the opportunity of seeing *their* productions on the walls, and be in danger of forming *more* false impressions.

Yours,
PEREGRINE.

*Extracts from Moxon's "Grainer's Guide."*

In his chapter on *Preparing Grounds and Polishing*, he says, "Smoothness is a quality essentially necessary in house-painting, and more particularly in imitations; for, however well managed the work may be in other respects, without a smooth surface your labour will lose half its value." Again, "But where the house-painter's judgment is most required, is in old houses, or in houses that have formerly been painted by other painters, perhaps on the cheap system of contract, which is very dangerous to the grainer, as his work would be destroyed should the paint peel off after it is varnished. This is generally in consequence of the painter being cheapened down to such a low price that he cannot afford to take off the old paint where necessary, and the person who employs him finds, when it is too late, that he is the loser."

*Marbles.*—"The chief beauty in a good imitation of marble is the transparent effect."—"In varnishing marbles, use the best polishing copal, and never put turpentine into it."

*Sienna.*—"When Sienna marble is imitated on very uneven plaster, it is well to use flat colours, and not varnish the work."—"This style (the deep-toned) of Sienna marble is adapted for columns and pilasters, where a rich style of colouring is required. Suppose the walls of a vestibule or corridor to be Sienna, in the crayon style, with pillars and pilasters in this, the effect would be rich without detracting from the architectural effect."

*Egyptian Green.*—"Sometimes there are beautiful brown patches in Egyptian green, and although this colour is considered a defect in the marble, in imitations it undoubtedly adds much beauty."—"This marble being dark and strong in colour, is adapted for columns and chimney-pieces."

*Black and Gold.*—"This is a useful imitation for chimney-pieces."

*Rosso Antiquo.*—"This is a scarce marble. The imitation of it is very simple, and when the light patches are properly grouped, produces a pleasing effect on pillars and pilasters."

*Lapis lazuli.*—"As this valuable marble can only be found in small pieces, a little judgment is necessary in introducing it for decorative purposes. A corresponding degree of richness should prevail where it is introduced. Gilding forms a beautiful contrast, and never fails to produce a pleasing effect."

*Bloodstone.*—"This famous stone is a native of the East, but it is also found in considerable quantities in the Island of Rum, in Scotland, and can only be had in small pieces. The imitation is very useful for mosaic painting, and therefore necessary to painters; and as the winter season is generally a dull time of year for the trade, those young people who do not practise the more useful woods and marbles, might be employed in making fancy work-tables, chess-tables, &c. There are many ways in which the stones might be arranged, but I shall only suggest two. Suppose you make the centre squares bloodstone and white, and the border jasper, the effect would be good; or the centre squares jasper and white, and the border verd antique or Egyptian green."

*Scotch Jasper.*—"As it seldom happens that there are two of these pebbles of the same colour, there can be no particular method adopted for imitating them; all must be left to the taste of the painter."—"These stones are very useful for mosaic work, which should be polished, as it is often closely examined, and the polishing adds greatly to their beauty."

*Woods.*—"Although a specimen might be more beautiful when painted like a picture, the wood of a room would be spoiled by being overwrought."—"It is of great importance that a decided difference should be made between the stiles and rails of doors; for instance, if you make cross rails full of work, make the upright stiles plain; for if you take a piece of mahogany, or any other wood, and change its position with regard to the light, you will perceive a great difference in its appearance."—"Some grainers find great difficulty in making their colours have a soft, woody appearance. Perhaps the reason of this is, that they do not pay sufficient attention to the other arrangement of colours in the apartment. If the prevailing colour be warm and glowing, the imitation should partake of the same character: for instance, suppose the walls to be crimson, the wood, if maple, satin-wood, or oak, should be highly coloured; or suppose the prevailing colour to be green, or any other cool-toned colour, then the wood should be cool and light. The same principle applies to all other arrangements of colours where harmony is required. If contrast be desired, it ought rather to be in the furniture than the architecture."

*Mahogany.*—"A young painter cannot have better practice than copying a good curl of mahogany, as it will teach him the art of curvilinear composition, from which are composed all elegant forms."—"In graining work that is panelled, the lights and shades in the panels should be stronger than in the stiles or rails."

*Maple Wood.*—"This beautiful wood being light and delicate, is particularly adapted for the wood-work of drawing-rooms and boudoirs, where a cheerful style of decoration generally prevails."—"The colour may vary very much."

*Rose Wood.*—"The rails and stiles should be more simple in the grain than the panels."

*Satin Wood.*—"This wood is much used for drawing-rooms and boudoirs."—"The straight-grained satin-wood is the best adapted for stiles and rails."

*Pollard Oak.*—"When this imitation is well done, it has a beautifully rich effect. It harmonizes with warm stone colours, while with sage green it forms a very pleasing contrast. From its colour it is well adapted for dining-rooms, libraries, and lobbies. The colour may vary from the lightness of maple to the depth of mahogany, and consequently is very useful for decorative purposes."—"In consequence of the brittle nature of the wood, it does not stand, so that a good imitation is much better than the reality."

*Wainscot.*—"The knowledge of the best and quickest method of imitating this, the most useful of all imitations, is of the greatest importance, both to masters and workmen."—"Oak is adapted for all styles of building, and never fails to please when well done. It harmonizes with warm colours, and makes a pleasant contrast with cold ones. It looks well on ceilings, cornices, walls, and wood, in dining-rooms, libraries, and lobbies, especially in Gothic buildings."—"In some situations, the panels painted pollard oak, and the stiles plain oak, have a very good effect."

*Morocco.*—"The imitation of morocco is useful where a clothed and comfortable effect is required to be produced. It may be any colour."—"It may be here observed, that in apartments where there are green or crimson walls, cream-colour or French white is the most appropriate for ceilings and cornices, unless the imitation of some light wood be preferred. Gilded stars or other ornaments look well on morocco, and the effect of an apartment will be more beautiful if the enrichments on the ceilings, cornices, and wood-work, be hatched with gold, and sometimes the effect may be further improved by painting the back-ground of the enrichments with the prevailing colour of the apartment; or, if a gay or brilliant effect be desired, bright colours may be introduced from the carpet into the back-ground of the enrichments on the ceilings and cornices. This style of painting is called the Polychrome, and requires a tasteful judgment to select the most appropriate colours, so as to relieve each other, and produce the desired gaiety without harshness or glare.* But one hint I beg to suggest to our master-painters: that is, that in all decorations a proper regard should be had to the character of the building, and particularly of each apartment in which he is employed to exercise his professional skill; as painters should rather endea-

* Those who are desirous for information on this style of painting and its origin, are referred to Art. VIII. in the 35th number of the *Foreign Quarterly Review*, Oct. 1836.

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